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The Printed Kerver Book of Hours and the Four “Spanish Saints”
Sophia Germond

Portland State University Library Special Collections’ Book of Hours, printed in 1507 by Thielman Kerver in Paris, lists the feast days of saints in the calendar near the front of the book and contains a liturgy of saints later on near the middle. When PSU acquired the book, it was accompanied with an overview from the book dealer citing the inclusion of four Spanish saints as evidence that the book’s intended audience or patrons were from Catalonia, Spain. The four saints are enumerated as Saint Narcissus of Girona, Saint Braulio of Zaragoza, Saint Exuperius of Pamplona, and Saint Eulalia of Barcelona.

Saint Narcissus was the patron saint of Girona, whose feast day in the PSU Book of Hours is listed as October 29. Today, the Catalanian city of Girona still celebrates Saint Narcissus’s feast as a city-wide festival. Saint Narcissus was a bishop in Girona, and his tomb is located at the cathedral in Girona where it is famous as a local legend; in the late 13th century, French invaders sacked the cathedral and his tomb, from which a swarm of flies burst out and “vanquished” the French soldiers.¹ This local legend remains a major part of Saint Narcissus’s festival and legacy into modernity. This legend, tied with national and local pride, may have contributed to Saint Narcissus’s inclusion in the PSU Book of Hours if it were intended for a Spanish or Catalanian audience.

¹ Kammerer.



Of the four saints, Saint Braulio of Zaragoza (590-651 CE) is the only one to appear in both the calendar and later in the liturgy of saints. Braulio was a scholar who became the Bishop of Zaragoza, Spain, after his brother John passed away.² His accomplishments include advising several Spanish and Visigoth kings and successfully converting the Visigoths to Christianity. While elsewhere the Roman calendar celebrates Saint Braulio's feast day on March 26, in Spain from the first millennium to today his feast day is celebrated on March 18, as it is listed in

the PSU Kerver Book of Hours. This evidence supports the notion that this Book of Hours was intended for a Spanish audience.

The book dealer lists one of the four saints as "Exuperius of Pamplona," citing the calendar's inclusion of "Exupery episcopi" on June 14. However, no mention of an "Exuperius of Pamplona," or any Exuperius who was a bishop related to Pamplona, exist in liturgical records. There was a Saint Exuperius of Toulouse, France, a bishop who was famous for his charity in the Eastern Mediterranean. It is estimated that Saint Exuperius of Toulouse died around 411 CE. His feast day is September 28. The Reverend Alban Butler includes a piece of evidence that may connect these two stories; *The Lives* is one of few

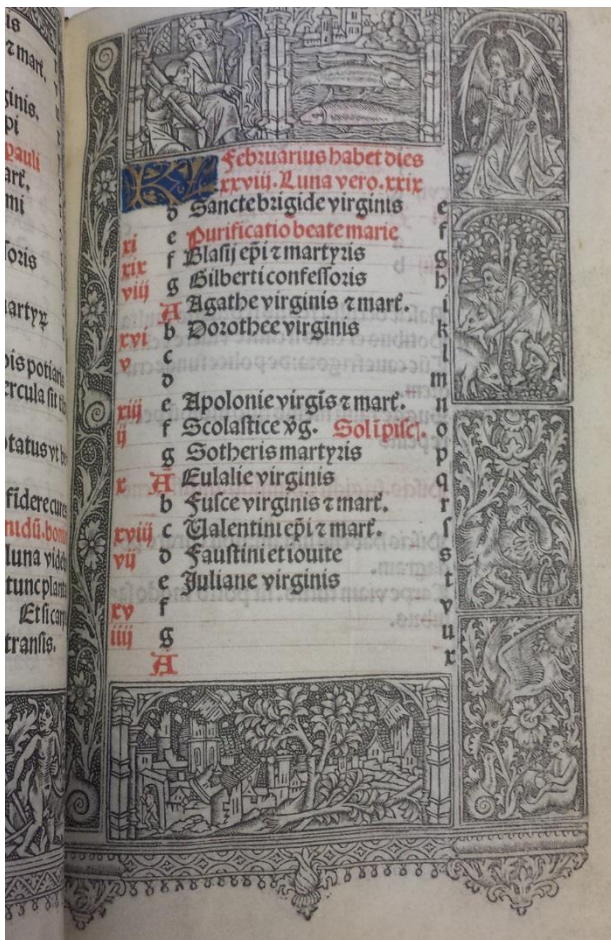
² Bjork.

sources that mentions Saint Exuperius of Toulouse's translation day, June 14.³ It is possible that the PSU Kerver Book of Hours intends to list Exuperius of Toulouse, and not of Pamplona, contrary to the dealer's notes. Toulouse is geographically close to the France-Spain border. Geographic proximity, and not modern national borders, may be a factor towards Saint Exuperius' inclusion in the PSU Kerver Book of Hours.

The only Spanish saint listed in the PSU Kerver Book of Hours who was not a bishop is Eulalia of Barcelona. She is mentioned only in the calendar, with her feast day listed as

February 12, and her translation day October 25. Her story is one of divergent legends: there are two possible Spanish Eulalias, and their attributes are often combined in poems, hymns, and records.⁴ Eulalia of Merida, Spain, lived under the Roman Emperor Diocletian during his persecutions in the 4th century CE. She refused to give up her purity and virginity and denied the pagan gods of the Romans, and for it was burnt at the stake.

Three centuries later, the legend of Eulalia of Barcelona, who also suffered under Diocletian's persecutions, appears in sources



³ Butler, "Exuperius."

⁴ Messenger

and writings around the 8th century CE.⁵ Eulalia of Barcelona was crucified for her Christian faith and then decapitated. Both Eulalias are associated with the symbol of the white dove; it is said that when Eulalia of Merida suffered from inhalation of smoke from during martyrdom, a white dove flew from her mouth. When Eulalia of Barcelona was decapitated after her crucifixion, a white dove flew from her neck. The scholar Ruth Ellis Messenger surmises that Eulalia of Merida was “adopted and venerated” as the local saint and patron of Barcelona.⁶ Because the PSU Kerver Book of Hours lists only “Eulalia virginis,” instead of specifying “of Barcelona” as the dealer has denoted, it may be estimated that even as early as 1507, when the Book of Hours was printed, the two Eulalias were considered the same.

That the book dealer considers this printed Book of Hours was intended for a Catalonian audience is plausible, especially considering the evidence of the prayer printed in Spanish, and Braulio’s Spanish feast day listed on March 18 rather than the Roman calendar’s March 26. These saints were only mentioned in the calendar of the PSU Book of Hours, save for Saint Braulio who was included in the liturgy, which tells us that these local saints would have had a more cultural and local significance to a Catalonian audience than a necessarily spiritual one.

⁵ Vachez

⁶ Messenger

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